(b) if so, the amount of foreign exchange during the mid February, 2002 in the country; and

(c) the reasons for non-utilization of this foreign exchange to check the devaluation of Indian currency and the amount utilized to check the devaluation of Indian currency out of the said amount during the year 2001-02?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) and (b) India's foreign exchange reserves (including gold and SDRs) held by the Reserve Bank of India amounted to US $ 50.21 billion as on February 15, 2002. This shows an increase of US $ 7.93 billion during the current financial year so far, compared with the level of US $ 42.28 billion at the end of March, 2001.

(c) The exchange rate of the rupee against the US dollar is broadly market determined. At the same time in order to even out lumpy demand and supply in the relatively thin foreign exchange market and to smoothen sharp movements in the exchange rate, the Reserve Bank of India makes sales and purchases of foreign exchange, as considered necessary. As per the latest information available, sales and purchases by the RBI from the market amounted to US $ 11.74 billion and US $ 14.56 billion respectively during the first nine months of 2001-02.

Devaluation of rupee against U.S. dollar

†72. SHRI KAPIL SIBAL:
SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that value of rupee has been decreasing constantly over the last few years in the country;

(b) if so, to what extent the value of Indian rupee has decreased

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

against U.S. dollar from March, 1998 to February, 2002; and

(c) what has been its effects on India's foreign trade?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) The exchange rate of the rupee against the US dollar, effective from March, 1993, is largely market determined. Under this system, the rupee-dollar rate moves in both directions on a day-to-day basis depending on the demand for and supply of foreign exchange in the market and short-term factors. The rupee-dollar rate is also influenced to some extent by the strength of the US dollar in the international currency markets.

(b) The rupee depreciated by 18.8 per cent against the US dollar from the monthly average of Rs. 39.50 per U.S. dollar in March, 1998 to the average of Rs. 48.66 in February, 2002 (upto 21-2-2002).

(c) The depreciation of rupee, given other things, is expected to help promote exports and strengthen our efforts at cost-effective import substitution.

Employment on compassionate grounds in PNB

73. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD:
SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of applications received by Punjab National Bank, Bhopal, Regional Office/Head Office, Bhikaji Cama Place, New Delhi during 2001 and so far, for appointment of the dependants of the deceased employees on compassionate grounds;

(b) the number of cases in which appointment on compassionate grounds has been made and the number of cases in which appointment has not so far been made togetherwith the reasons for delay, if any; and

(c) by when, all the cases are likely to be cleared for appointment?